

Uinta National Forest

May 2003

land and resource management plan revision | newsletter no. 4

Message From the Forest Supervisor

I am extremely pleased to announce the completion of our Revised Forest Plan. Uinta National Forest personnel have worked very closely with the public, other agencies, government, and American Indian Tribes to produce this plan. It will guide management of the almost one million acres of National Forest System lands for the next 10 – 15 years. This is a major planning milestone for us!

The Revised Plan evolved from input received from the public at several public meetings, well over 1,000 comments, formulation and detailed analysis of eight alternatives, use of the best available science, and the work of a dedicated interdisciplinary team of Forest Service employees. Every comment received was carefully read and fully considered in making the decision on the Revised Plan. I personally want to thank each and every person who took the time to be involved, comment, and help us develop the best possible Revised Plan. The science supporting this plan was both biological and social based. It is extremely important to remember that discussions about the Forest are also discussions about people. We must never lose sight of the ties between Forest resources and the people who are connected to the Forest.

I doubt that the Revised Plan will be the perfect plan for anyone. Such is our nature and the deeply complex human, natural, and physical resources of our national forests. However, I strongly believe that the Revised Plan has something for everyone. We have worked tirelessly to ensure that the Revised Plan will allow for both the use and protection of the Forest's resources, not only for the current generation, but for future generations as well. I hope that as you become more familiar with the Revised Plan, you will be as pleased as I am about what it offers.



Peter W. Karp
Forest Supervisor



The Uinta National Forest encompasses just under 1,000,000 acres of public land. With its

proximity to a large metropolitan area, it is one of the most heavily visited national forests with 3.16 million forest visits in 2002 alone.



Devil's Kitchen Geologic Interest Site



The Record of Decision selecting the Revised Plan was signed on April 7, 2003.

Implementation will begin in June, 2003.

2003 Forest Plan

The Uinta National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) guides all natural resource management activities on the Forest to meet the objectives of federal law, regulations, and policy. The first Forest Plan for the Uinta National Forest was developed and implemented in 1984. Law requires that Forest Plans be revised every 10 to 15 years.

The Uinta formally initiated the process of revising the Forest Plan in September 1999. The Forest conducted a review of the historical use and occupancy of the Forest, past and current inventories, current environmental considerations, and new information that has become available since the implementation of the 1984 Forest Plan. Forest staff communicated with other federal and state agencies, American Indian Tribes, local governments, and the public regarding Forest resource conditions and management. The information gathered was used to identify management direction that needed to be changed or established. Eight alternatives were developed and analyzed in detail. The record of decision selecting the Revised Plan was signed on April 7, 2003. Implementation of the revised plan will begin in June 2003.

Issues

Seven primary issues were identified and are addressed by the Revised Forest Plan. Each of these issues is described briefly below followed by a description of how the revised Forest Plan addresses each one.

Issue 1 – Recreation and Recreation Access

There were many public recommendations for the management of recreation and recreation access. Some advocated the elimination of most motorized recreation on the Forest; others recommended that existing motorized recreation opportunities be expanded in order to accommodate the rapid growth of these activities.

The Revised Plan offers a wide range of recreation opportunities and a balance of motorized and non-motorized opportunities. Existing uses are maintained, while providing for the protection of important undeveloped areas and addressing important resource concerns that have resulted from past use.

Many of those who commented believe that reductions in motorized



opportunities unfairly impact the elderly, physically challenged, and young by denying them access to the more remote areas of the Forest. The Revised Plan maintains most of the opportunities currently available, providing visitors of all abilities access to a range of forest experiences from developed sites to semi-primitive areas. Motorized uses are provided on approximately 716,000 acres, or 80 percent of the Forest. Although the number of motorized acres is slightly reduced from the 1984 Forest Plan, the total miles of classified roads are unchanged, while the total miles of motorized trails are projected to increase slightly (approximately 1 percent) to about 330 miles.

Because motorized recreation will be restricted to designated roads and trails throughout the year (except for over-the-snow vehicles), Forest users will no longer be able to use motorized OHVs to retrieve legally taken game. Although this change may make retrieval of game more difficult for some, the Forest has experienced a high number of user-created trails and subsequent resource damage as a result of this policy. The Revised Plan will make the Uinta's policy consistent with neighboring federal and state lands throughout Utah.

Considerable controversy was generated regarding the alternatives that proposed designating the Tibble Fork area as non-motorized. The Revised Plan responds

to these concerns. The area west of the Great Western Trail is designated semi-primitive non-motorized, while the area east of and including the Great Western Trail is classified as semi-primitive motorized. These allocations result in 15 miles of motorized trail and 20 miles of non-motorized trail.

Opportunities for over-the-snow vehicles are maintained on approximately 660,230 acres, or 74 percent of the Forest. Over-the-snow use is allowed off road and trail across much of the Forest. However, these vehicles are limited to designated roads and trails within deer and elk winter range in order to avoid disturbance to these species. Additionally, to address habitat concerns for the Canada lynx, no increase in designated over-the-snow routes or play areas will be allowed within the two established Lynx Analysis Units on the north end of the Heber Ranger District.

The results of the 2002 National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey showed that hiking or walking was the most common activity reported by Forest visitors. The Revised Plan insures that the Forest will maintain adequate opportunities for this type of recreation. The Revised Plan emphasizes non-motorized opportunities on approximately 181,340 acres, or 20 percent of the Forest, an increase of about 8 percent. The non-motorized trail system will increase to 320 miles, an increase of approximately 16

The Revised Plan maintains existing recreation uses while, at the same time,

providing protection for important wildlife habitat areas.



Cascade Springs



Recommended additions to the Lone Peak, Mount Timpanogos, and

Mount Nebo Wilderness areas, totalling 9,890 acres, will improve wilderness manageability.



Mount Timpanogos

percent.

Some members of the public recommended that opportunities for heli-skiing be maintained, while others recommended they be eliminated. The Revised Plan will continue to provide opportunities for heli-skiing in some areas.

High levels of undeveloped recreation use are resulting in unacceptable impacts to resources in some areas. The Revised Plan identifies undeveloped recreation corridors along the roads experiencing the highest levels of use. Management in these corridors will focus on hardening sites and providing restroom facilities where necessary in order to better manage use and minimize impacts on the resources.

Management of developed recreation will focus on maintaining or improving existing facilities and encouraging use during non-peak periods in order to increase the utilization of these sites and accommodate more users. This approach is more consistent with the levels of funding that are expected during the next planning period.

Issue 2 – Roadless and Wilderness

The issue of inventoried roadless area (IRA) management and wilderness recommendations stirred expressions of strong, often widely divergent opinions. Some members of the public believe that all IRAs, and in some cases the entire Forest, would be best protected by recommending them for wilderness designation. Others oppose any additional wilderness recommendations or restrictions on activities allowed in IRAs, some even requested that existing wilderness designation be rescinded. Because Congress designates wilderness areas, it is outside the authority of the Forest Service to rescind existing designations. Many expressed opinions falling somewhere between the two positions described above.

Appendix C of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) provides a detailed description of each of the 35 IRAs along with a capability, availability, and need assessment, and an evaluation of each area's roadless characteristics. This information was used in making wilderness recommendations and determining which areas should be managed to remain in a more natural, undisturbed condition.

Recommended Wilderness

The Revised Plan recommends approximately 9,890 acres from the



Nephi, Mount Timpanogos, and Twin Peaks Roadless Areas for wilderness designation as additions to the Lone Peak, Mount Timpanogos, and Mount Nebo Wilderness Areas. These additions will improve wilderness manageability by providing boundaries that are more easily recognized on the ground. Although this recommendation is less than some would prefer, it responds to requests from local governments and members of the public to maintain the existing variety of uses important to local economies, lifestyles, and cultures.

The areas recommended for wilderness designation will be managed for non-impairment until Congress makes a decision on these recommendations. The additions to the Mount Nebo Wilderness Area will be managed as semi-primitive non-motorized. The additions to the Lone Peak and Mount Timpanogos Wilderness Areas will be managed as semi-primitive motorized. Existing uses in all recommended areas may continue, as long as they do not adversely impact wilderness characteristics. Many people believe all motorized uses should be prohibited to effectively protect these areas. Because the existing uses have not adversely impacted the wilderness characteristics of these areas to date, the Forest Service believes that the Revised Plan provides adequate protection.

This Revised Plan will allow greater flexibility using management tools to achieve the objectives of the National Fire Plan and the Healthy Forests Initiative than would be available with larger wilderness designations. It will be possible to treat more areas across the Forest for accumulations of hazardous fuels. Moreover, wilderness designations limit the tools available when wildfires ignite. Fires are far more likely to escape initial attack when they occur within wilderness areas because of the limitations on access and the tools that may be used to fight them. The cost to fight wildfire increases dramatically when initial attack efforts are unsuccessful. The Revised Plan reduces the risks to public health, safety, and private property, and reduces costs associated with uncontrolled wildfire both within the urban interface and across the Forest.

Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) Management

Many people expressed a strong desire to protect the Cascade Mountain/Provo Peak area. Under the Revised Plan, this area will continue to provide Forest visitors with the opportunity to experience a more primitive, pristine environment. Approximately 19,590 acres from the Twin Peaks and South Fork Provo River Roadless Areas will be managed under Management Prescription 2.6, Undeveloped. No new classified or temporary road

If the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR) does become effective, it will

supercede this plan, but only in those areas inside the boundaries of the 1999 Roadless Area Inventory.



In order to assure that the Forest continues to be a source of high quality water, the

Revised Plan further strengthens direction to insure that water quality meets state and federal water standards.



Heber Ranger District. Photo by Mel Lewis

construction or motorized trail construction will be allowed in these areas and most on-the-ground motorized uses will be prohibited to protect the undeveloped character of these roadless areas. Exceptions will be allowed for limited administrative purposes or to protect human life.

The Revised Plan balances resource management needs and recreation opportunities with protection considerations. The remaining IRAs on the Forest are managed under a variety of management prescriptions and ROS classifications based on the evaluation of each IRA's characteristics.

A semi-primitive non-motorized ROS classification is applied to 118,420 acres, or 21 percent of the IRAs on the Uinta National Forest. No new classified road construction or temporary road construction will be allowed in these areas. No on-the-ground motorized activities will be allowed except for limited administrative purposes or for the protection of human life. Roadless qualities within these areas will be protected while existing non-motorized uses continue.

A semi-primitive motorized ROS classification is applied to 315,960 acres, or 57 percent of the IRAs on the Forest. No new classified road construction will be allowed in these areas, although temporary road

construction may be permitted. The roadless characteristics of these areas will be protected long-term, while permitting short-term impacts to facilitate management activities such as those designed to reduce hazardous fuels, treat insect and disease infestations, and improve wildlife habitat. Classified and temporary road construction may be allowed within the remaining 22 percent of IRAs (120,440 acres).

Two percent (12,750 acres) of IRAs are managed under Management Prescription 5.2, Forested Ecosystems – Vegetation Management. Although management direction for these areas includes timber objectives, high yields are not a priority. These areas will be managed to maintain the health and productivity of the forested vegetation and allow other compatible uses.

Issue 3 – Air, Watershed, and Water Quality

The Revised Plan continues to strengthen direction for the protection of watersheds and water quality provided by the 1984 Forest Plan. Generally, waters on the Uinta National Forest are rated as “high quality waters” by the Utah Division of Water Quality. Only three lakes and two streams are



currently listed as impaired and one stream is proposed for listing on the State's 303(d) list. In all cases, Forest management activities were not the cause of the impairment.

Many communities along the Wasatch Front and across the Forest depend on water yield from forest watersheds. In order to assure that the Forest continues to be a source of high quality water, the Revised Plan further strengthens direction to insure that water quality meets state and federal water standards.

The Revised Plan allocates most critical watersheds on the Forest to Management Prescription 3.2, Watershed Emphasis, with a semi-primitive non-motorized ROS classification. Motorized recreation, grazing, and timber harvest activities are prohibited in these areas.

The Plan incorporates direction for the maintenance and enhancement of watershed health and water quality. Best Management Practices are incorporated to maintain soil productivity and water quality. Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas are identified along streams throughout the Forest. Grazing standards and guidelines specify allowable levels of vegetation utilization and ground cover to insure long-term soil productivity and riparian health. The closure of two vacant sheep allotments in the Mount Timpanogos

area and closure of the Strawberry Project lands to grazing will afford additional watershed and water quality protection.

Dispersed recreation activities have had adverse impacts on riparian health. High use areas are frequently located close to streams. As discussed above under Recreation, the Revised Plan's focus on dispersed recreation management in corridors currently experiencing high levels of use will help to prevent or mitigate adverse effects to adjacent resources.

Goals in the Revised Plan provide that Forest management activities will not impede attainment of state clean air standards. The Forest will comply with all existing clean air laws. No violation of clean air standards are anticipated as a result of management activities implemented under the guidance of the Revised Plan.

Issue 4 – Viability and Biodiversity

The Revised Plan incorporates conservation measures from approved conservation strategies and recovery plans as standards and guidelines. Flexibility is provided to utilize prescribed fire, wildland fire use, and mechanical treatment methods to reduce hazardous fuels and move

The Revised Plan places an emphasis on improving and/or maintaining aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitats and incorporates conservation measures from approved conservation strategies and recovery plans.



Canada Lynx



Grazing and timber harvest activities continue to contribute to local economies and

lifestyles while insuring the maintenance of productive, resilient, and resistant habitats.



Community Flat

ecosystems toward a more natural fire regime. Little habitat loss or fragmentation would occur and the Uinta National Forest would be maintained as an important biological resource.

The Revised Plan places an emphasis on improving and/or maintaining aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitats. Standards and guidelines provide for maintaining and/or enhancing species viability and biodiversity. Forty percent of the Forest will be managed under Management Prescriptions 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 which direct that management will emphasize preserving, maintaining, or restoring quality aquatic, terrestrial, and/or hydrologic conditions.

The Revised Plan addresses concerns about disease transmission from domestic livestock to bighorn sheep on the Pleasant Grove Ranger District. Two currently vacant sheep allotments in the Mount Timpanogos area have been classified as unsuitable and will be closed to grazing. This closure will alleviate recreation conflicts and improve habitat conditions for bighorn sheep by greatly reducing the potential for transmission of nonendemic bacteria and viruses which can predispose bighorn sheep to pneumonia and mortality.

The Strawberry Project lands are also classified as unsuitable for grazing by the Revised Plan. This area has been

severely impacted by past overgrazing. Grazing has been discontinued in this area since 1990. This decision will allow the Strawberry Project lands to continue recovery and alleviate concerns regarding water quality, fisheries, and recreation conflicts.

Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas are identified along streams throughout the Forest. Management activities in these areas will be implemented so as to protect the structure, function, and composition of these critical ecosystems. Grazing standards and guidelines specify allowable levels of vegetation utilization and ground cover in riparian areas to insure long-term soil productivity and rangeland health.

Issue 5 – Social and Economic

Maintenance of commodity and non-commodity uses and Forest access were recommended by local governments and many members of the public. The Revised Plan continues to allow for the extraction of renewable and nonrenewable resources while insuring the maintenance of productive, resilient, and resistant habitats. Grazing and timber harvest activities continue to contribute to local economies and lifestyles. In support of the National Energy Policy, access is maintained to



most areas of the Forest with high or moderate potential for oil and gas exploration and development.

Opportunities important to both visitors and local residents are maintained, such as a wide variety of non-motorized and motorized recreation opportunities, including heli-skiing. Forest access is considered a critical element of local lifestyles and sense of place. Access is generally maintained, while areas important to many Forest users for the primitive, undeveloped environments and solitude they provide are protected. People of all ages and abilities will have access to a variety of Forest experiences.

Issue 6 – Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring requirements in the Revised Plan meet or exceed all National Forest Management Act requirements. The Revised Plan delineates 18 watershed-based management areas along with descriptions of the desired future condition for each area. These detailed desired future conditions will better facilitate the design of management activities and the measurement of the effectiveness of management efforts during the next planning period.

Issue 7 – Lands: Property Boundary Management

The Revised Plan lists criteria for identification of lands for acquisition and disposal/conveyance. Priority is placed on maintaining or improving public access and recreation opportunities, aquatic and terrestrial habitats, cultural or historic resources, and more efficient management.

Conclusion

The Revised Plan strikes a balance between relatively high levels of recreation use and ecological health while providing for existing commodity uses. The Revised Plan's guidance for the management of Forest resources over the next 10-15 years is designed to attain desired future conditions. The Revised Plan provides for adaptive management and monitoring to facilitate resolving uncertainties in the management of Forest resources based on experience and the incorporation of new information as it becomes available.

Priority is placed on maintaining or improving public access and recreation

opportunities, aquatic and terrestrial habitats, cultural and historic resources, and more efficient management.



Alpine Loop Scenic Backway

Uinta National Forest



2003 Forest Plan | May 2003

Copies of the 2003 Forest Plan and associated documents are available in hard copy, on CDROM, and on the Uinta National Forest's website at www.fs.fed.us/r4/uinta/forest_plan_toc.htm. Hard copies can be obtained by visiting any of the Uinta National Forest Offices.

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Copies may be obtained by calling 801-342-5100 or by emailing uintaplan@fs.fed.us. When requesting documents, please specify which of the following you would like to receive:

2003 Forest Plan
Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) Volumes I and II
FEIS Appendices Volumes I, II, and III
FEIS Executive Summary
Record of Decision

For more information about the 2003 Forest Plan, please contact the Forest Plan Revision Team at the Uinta National Forest Supervisor's Office at (801) 342-5100 or by emailing uintaplan@fs.fed.us.

Uinta National Forest



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